

**MASSACHUSETTS
BOARD OF RESPIRATORY CARE**

**ALERT ON THE INSERTION AND MAINTENANCE OF
ARTERIAL LINES
AND VASCULAR CATHETERS**

September 19, 2017

In its regulation at 261 Code of Massachusetts Regulations (CMR) 2.02, the Massachusetts Board of Respiratory Care notes that “Respiratory Care is a changing and evolving profession.”

Consequently, the Board reviews and updates its rules and regulations from time to time to assure that such rules and regulations are consistent with patient safety, best practices and the guidance of the American Association for Respiratory Care (AARC).

In response to numerous inquiries regarding respiratory therapists’ scope of practice and after lengthy review and discussion of the information available to its members, the members of the Massachusetts Board of Respiratory Care (“the Board”) voted to adopt the AARC’s position on the insertion and maintenance of arterial lines by respiratory therapists and the insertion and maintenance of vascular access catheters by respiratory therapists.

With regard to arterial lines, the respiratory therapist’s education provides extensive training in maintenance of normal acid-base balance, oxygenation and oxygen delivery, ventilation, and interpretation and management of arterial blood gases. These fundamentals of Respiratory Care education make the respiratory therapist uniquely qualified to undertake further education to be competent in this procedure. The requisite education for a respiratory therapist to be qualified to insert and maintain arterial lines should include specific training, proof of competence and continuing education as outlined by those institutions that use respiratory therapists to perform this procedure.

Similarly, with regard to vascular access catheters (VAC), the Board adopts the position that qualified and appropriately educated respiratory therapists may insert and maintain VACs. The respiratory therapist education provides extensive training in cardiorespiratory anatomy, physiology and pathophysiology. The training required for a respiratory therapist to be qualified to insert VACs should include specific training, proof of competence and continuing education as outlined by those institutions that use respiratory therapists to perform this procedure.